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ABSTRACT

Historically, theories of personality development assigned prominence to the construct of autonomy, which often represented a developmental endpoint. To develop and validate an observer measure of autonomy and to further describe the dynamics underlying the personality and behavior of autonomous individuals, a 10-item scale (Auto CQ) was developed based on correlational and item analysis of California Q-set descriptions for 314 adults. In a second study using 142 college sophomores, validation of the Auto CQ was suggested by correlational analyses of the scale with other measures of autonomy, both observer and self-report. Additional analyses with the California Psychological Inventory and Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory indicated that autonomy was related with poise, ascendancy, self-assurance, interpersonal adequacy, personal maturity, and psychological health. Descriptions indicated that both positive and negative personality attributes were associated with the concept of autonomy. (Author/JAC)

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AN OBSERVER MEASURE OF AUTONOMY: DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION

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AN OBSERVER MEASURE OF AUTONOMY: DEVELOPMENT AND VALIDATION¹

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Historically, theories of personality development assigned prominence to the construct of autonomy (Erikson, 1950; Jung, 1933; Murray, 1938). The attainment of autonomy often represented a developmental endpoint, synonymous with psychological maturity and personal fulfillment (Hogan, in press; Kohlberg, 1981; Piaget, 1932). Despite its importance, autonomy continually proved an elusive concept, both in its definition and measurement.

Autonomous individuals possess qualities of independence, freedom, self-direction, and self-determination. According to Murray (1938), they wish neither to lead nor be led, want to go their own way, uninfluenced and uncoerced by others. He further described such persons as "unattached, defiant of conventions, irresponsible, rebellious, radical, stubborn, and resistant" (p.156-7). Gough & Heilbrun (1980) used the terms "assertive, egotistical, strong-willed, indifferent toward others, headstrong, and unconventional" (p.12). Finally, Hogan (1973) conceptualized autonomy as the capacity to make decisions without being influenced by peer group pressure or the dictates of authority.

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These descriptions suggest an important but often overlooked property of autonomy; specifically, autonomous individuals embody both socially desirable (e.g., independent, strong-willed) and non-desirable (e.g., egotistical, irresponsible) qualities. For a measure of autonomy to be considered valid it should assess both of these aspects. The purpose of this study was to develop and validate an observer measure of autonomy. An ancillary goal was to further describe the dynamics underlying the personality and behavior of autonomous individuals.

Method

Study 1

Subjects. A pool of subjects ($n=314$) was drawn from the archives of the Institute of Human Development (IHD) at the University of California. This group consisted of individuals involved in one of three longitudinal studies conducted at IHD since the mid-1920s. Participants ranged in age from approximately 36 to 50 years with a mean age of 43.9 years. There was a slightly larger number of females ($n=170$) to males ($n=144$). All data used were collected between the years 1964 to 1971 as part of the 40 to 50 year followup interviews for the longitudinal studies².

Measures. Items for the observer autonomy scale were derived from the California Q-set (CQ) (Block, 1961). The CQ consists of 100 statements each one descriptive of a particular aspect of an individual's personality or behavior. Statements are grouped into one of nine categories ranging from "1" (most uncharacterist-

²For an extensive description of IHD longitudinal studies refer Eichorn et. al. (1981), p.3-51.

ic) to "9" (most characteristic). Each category along this continuum is defined by a fixed number of items thereby ensuring a normal distribution.

Each subject was described with a CQ by three judges; one judge conducted the followup interview while the other judges read verbatim transcripts. The CQs of the two judges with the best agreement were composited with this resultant composite re-sorted to retain the original normal distribution. The average Spearman-Brown reliability of the composite was .74 with a range from .59 to .88 .

An observer scale of autonomy was developed by correlating CQ-item #96 ("Values own independence and autonomy") with the remaining CQ items. Correlations which exceeded $\pm .40$ were grouped into a scale reversing the category position for the negatively correlated items [e.g., a category placement of "3" (fairly uncharacteristic) was changed to "7" (fairly characteristic)]. Items were subsequently deleted from the scale until (1) a maximum level of alpha reliability was achieved and (2) no negative correlations existed among any of the scale items.

Results

The correlation of the CQ statement "Values own independence and autonomy" with the remaining CQ statements resulted in 14 items with correlations greater than $\pm .40$ ($p < .001$). The elimination of items with poor inter-item and item-total correlations resulted in an observer autonomy scale containing 10 items with an alpha reliability of .88 and a mean inter-item correlation of .41 . Table 1 presents a complete description of the scale (hereafter designated Auto CQ) including item-total corre-

lations.

Insert Table 1

A second study was conducted to ascertain the validity of the Auto CQ scale.

Method

Study 2

Subjects. A pool of subjects ($n=169$) was drawn from the archives of the Institute of Personality Assessment and Research (IPAR) at the University of California. This group consisted of college sophomores who participated in one of two assessment studies at IPAR between the years 1978 to 1982. They were predominantly white, middle to upper-middle class, with slightly more females ($n=86$) than males ($n=83$)³.

Measures. Similar to Study 1, observer ratings of autonomy based upon the California Q-set were obtained though the CQs were a composite of five judges, not two. The average alpha reliability of the composite was .76 with a range from .40 to .92. A second observer autonomy scale was generated based upon the Adjective Check List (ACL) (Gough & Hailbrun, 1980). The ACL contains 300 adjectives descriptive of interpersonal behavior, self-conceptions, and personal values. Its 37 personality dimensions include autonomy. Each subject was described with an ACL by 10 judges. Two judges had conducted separate interviews; the remaining eight based

³For an extensive description of IPAR assessment procedures refer Wiggins (1973), p.539-553.

their descriptions upon impressions garnered during an 8-hour, one day assessment. The 10 ACLs were composited by applying a "30% rule". If 30% of the judges endorsed a particular adjective, that adjective was considered descriptive of the subject. By this method the endorsement rate of the judges as measured by the number of adjectives checked (~70-110 adjectives) approximated the average endorsement rate of subjects who respond to the ACL as a self-report measure (Gough, personal communication, 1981). The average alpha reliability of the judges was .80 with a range from .36 to .94 . In addition, subjects completed a self-report ACL which was scored for the autonomy scale, the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) (Hathaway & McKinley, 1967), and the California Psychological Inventory (CPI) (Gough, 1957).

Results .

As a means for validation, the CQ autonomy scale was correlated with the ACL observer autonomy scale. The correlation was .65 ($p < .001$) for males and .71 ($p < .001$) for females. To provide further validation, the CQ autonomy scale was correlated with the ACL self-report autonomy scale. The correlation was .46 ($p < .001$) for males and .45 ($p < .001$) for females⁴. The magnitude of correlations was substantial within method (observer vs. observer) and moderate between methods (observer vs. self-report). Such findings suggest Auto CQ as a valid measure of autonomy.

⁴Corrected for attenuation the correlations between Auto CQ and the ACL observer autonomy scale become .77 ($p < .001$) and .85 ($p < .001$); between Auto CQ and ACL self-report autonomy scale .59 ($p < .001$) and .58 ($p < .001$).

To further describe the personality of autonomous individuals, Auto CQ was correlated with the 18 standard CPI scales plus two additional scales of empathy (Hogan, 1969) and independence. The latter is a research scale recently developed at IPAR and both scales will be incorporated into the forthcoming revision of the CPI. For males, Auto CQ correlated substantially ($p < .001$) with dominance (.42), self-acceptance (.43), and independence (.40); moderately ($p < .01$) with social presence (.30), femininity (-.29), and empathy (.27); and weakly ($p < .05$) with sociability (.22), responsibility (-.22), and self-control (-.23). For females, Auto CQ correlated substantially ($p < .001$) with dominance (.42), capacity for status (.38), self-acceptance (.54), empathy (.39), and independence (.46); and moderately ($p < .01$) with sociability (.30), social presence (.30), and intellectual efficiency (.31).

Insert Table 2

Auto CQ was also correlated with the 10 standard MMPI scales. For males, the scale correlated weakly ($p < .05$) with social introversion (-.25). For females, Auto CQ correlated substantially ($p < .001$) with hypomania (.35); moderately ($p < .01$) with social introversion (-.33); and weakly ($p < .05$) with depression (-.28).

Insert Table 3

No other CPI or MMPI scales significantly correlated with the CQ autonomy scale.

Discussion

The most powerful CPI correlates of autonomy were dominance, self-acceptance, and independence. These dimensions identify individuals possessing qualities of leadership, self-confidence, and personal initiative. These correlates, coupled with the significant correlates of social presence and sociability, describe autonomous individuals as ambitious, forceful, adventurous, determined, outgoing, uninhibited, and resourceful. On the negative side, such individuals are also viewed as egotistical, argumentative, bossy, and conceited. However, their potential for social aloofness appears tempered by the empathic nature of their personality. They are sensitive to the feelings, desires, and motives of other people though at times this insight might be used for personal gain (e.g., demagoguery). Overall this pattern of correlates suggest that autonomy in general and the Auto CQ scale in particular relate to measures of poise, ascendancy, self-assurance, and interpersonal adequacy.

For males only, Auto CQ correlated negatively with the CPI dimensions of responsibility, self-control, and femininity. Autonomous men would score below the mean on these scales. Descriptors of such men include individualistic, courageous, daring, outgoing, and uninhibited. On the negative side, they are also seen as irresponsible, reckless, arrogant, rebellious, aggressive, undependable, and self-centered. For females only, Auto CQ correlated positively with capacity for status and intellectual efficiency. Descriptions of such women include individualistic, insightful, intelligent, capable, and confident.

With regard to the MMPI, few scales correlated significantly

suggestive of the psychologically healthy state of autonomous individuals, or at least the reasonably stable (non-neurotic) nature of their personality. Of those significant correlates, Auto CQ was negatively related with social introversion an indication that autonomous individuals are gregarious, outgoing, sociable, assertive, and adept if not manipulative at interpersonal relationships. For females only, autonomy was positively correlated with hypomania and negatively correlated with depression. This suggests that autonomous women are impulsive, active, and unpredictable. Overall, the MMPI correlates appear consistent with the pattern of personality described by the CPI, and the two sets of correlates appear consistent with previous researchers' descriptions of autonomous individuals.

These patterns of CPI and MMPI correlates also provide support for two earlier expressed positions concerning autonomy. First, the attainment of autonomy seems related to the development of a psychologically mature and stable state of mind. Second, autonomous individuals seem to possess both socially desirable and non-desirable qualities. As these descriptions indicated, both positive and negative attributes are associated with autonomous persons.

Implications and Conclusion

The implications of this study are straightforward. A measure of autonomy was developed which correlated significantly with both self-report and observer measures of autonomy thereby suggestive of the scale's validity. Additionally, this measure provided some insights into the character structure of autonomous individuals by its pattern of correlates with established measures of personality.

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Table 1

California Q-set Autonomy Scale ^a

<u>Item No.</u>	<u>Item Description</u>	<u>Item-Total Correlation</u> ^b
1	Is critical, skeptical, not easily impressed.	.57
8	Appears to have a high degree of intellectual capacity.	.48
14 *	Genuinely submissive; accepts domination comfortably.	.68
19 *	Seeks reassurance from others.	.64
24	Prides self on being objective, rational.	.63
40 *	Is vulnerable to real or fancied threat, generally fearful.	.55
52	Behaves in an assertive manner.	.65
71	Has high aspiration level for self.	.54
91	Is power oriented; values power in self and others.	.53
96	Values own independence and autonomy.	.72

* indicates reversed item.

^a alpha reliability = .88 .

^b mean inter-item correlation = .41 .

Table 2

Correlation Matrix

Observer (CQ) Autonomy Scale & CPI Scales

<u>CPI Scale</u>	<u>Males (n=83)</u>	<u>Females (n=86)</u>
Dominance (Do)	.42 ^a	.42 ^a
Capacity for Status (Cs)	.17	.38 ^a
Sociability (Sy)	.22 ^c	.30 ^b
Social Presence (Sp)	.30 ^b	.33 ^b
Self-Acceptance (Sa)	.43 ^a	.54 ^a
Well-Being (Wb)	.11	.06
Responsibility (Re)	-.22 ^c	.11
Socialization (So)	-.15	-.12
Self-Control (Sc)	-.23 ^c	-.15
Tolerance (To)	.03	.16
Good Impression (Gi)	-.20	.11
Communality (Cm)	.08	-.16
Achievement via Conformance (Ac)	.02	.15
Achievement via Independence (Ai)	.05	.14
Intellectual Efficiency (Ie)	.08	.31 ^b
Psychological Mindedness (Py)	.14	.17
Flexibility (fx)	.06	.05
Femininity (Fe)	-.29 ^b	-.14
Empathy (Em)	.27 ^b	.39 ^a
Independence (In) -	.40 ^a	.46 ^a

^a p < .001.

^b p < .01.

^c p < .05.

Table 3

Correlation Matrix

Observer (CQ) Autonomy Scale & MMPI Scales

<u>MMPI Scale</u>	<u>Males (n=83)</u>	<u>Females (n=86)</u>
Lie scale (L)	-.03	-.02
Validity scale (F)	-.07	-.15
Correction score (K)	.07	.18
Hypochondriasis (Hs+K)	-.06	.02
Depression (D)	-.21	-.28 ^c
Hysteria (Hy)	-.05	.16
Psychopathic Deviate (Pd+K)	.02	.12
Masculinity-Femininity (Mf)	-.01	-.04
Paranoia (Pa)	-.06	-.04
Psychasthenia (Pt+K)	-.15	-.14
Schizophrenia (Sc+K)	-.17	-.05
Hypomania (Ma+K)	.01	.35 ^a
Social Introversion (Si)	-.25 ^c	-.33 ^b

^a $p < .001.$

^b $p < .01.$

^c $p < .05.$